CLAIMS:

1. A compound of formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or derivative thereof:

Pep-A'-B'-C'-D' (I)

wherein formula (I) is written from N-terminus on the left to C-terminus at the right and:

"Pep" is a peptide or peptide analogue capable of binding to HCV NS3 protease;

A' is a proline residue which is optionally substituted;

B' is an amino acid or amino acid analogue having a non-polar side chain;

C' is an amino acid or amino acid analogue having a polar side chain; and

D' is selected from leucine, other amino acids or amino acid analogues having a non-polar aliphatic side chain, and peptides of 2 to 6 amino acids having leucine or other amino acid or amino acid analogue with a non-polar aliphatic side chain as N-terminal residue;

and wherein the bond between Pep and A' is substantially uncleavable by HCV NS3 protease.

2. The compound of claim 1, a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or derivative thereof which is C-

terminally amidated.

3. The compound of claim 1 or claim 2, a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or derivative thereof which is N-terminally acylated.

4. A compound, salt or derivative according to any one of claims 1 to 3 wherein A'-B'-C'-D' is a tetrapeptide of formula:

Pro-B'-C'-Leu

wherein B' and C' are as defined in claim 1.

5. A compound, salt or derivative according to any one of the previous claims wherein B' is selected from: β-cyclohexylalanine, phenylglycine, homophenylalanine, norleucine, leucine, methionine, norvaline and β-cyclopropylalanine.

6. A compound, salt or derivative according to claim 5 wherein B' is selected from cyclohexylalanine and phenylglycine.

7. A compound, salt or derivative according to any one of the previous claims wherein C' is selected from: aspartic acid, glutamic acid, γ-carboxyglutamic acid,

glutamine, asparagine, hydroxyproline, N-β-Aloc-diaminobutyric acid, thiazolylalanine, methionine sulfoxide, pyridylalanine and serine.

8. A compound, salt or derivative according to claim 7 wherein C' is aspartic acid.

9. A compound, salt or derivative according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the combination of amino acids B'C' is selected from:

Cha-Ser
Cha-Asp
Nle-Asp
Hof-Asp
Phg-Asp
Cha-Gln
Nle-Gln
Hof-Gln
Cha-Hyp
Nle-Hyp
Hof-Hyp
Nle-Ser

10. A compound, salt, or derivative according to any one of the preceding claims wherein Pep-OH is capable of

binding HCV NS3 protease, in the absence of the C-terminal residues A'-B'-C'-D', and has an IC_{50} below 100μM in an inhibition assay.

11. A compound, salt, or derivative according to any one of the preceding claims wherein Pep is a hexa-, penta- or tetra-peptide having formula (II) below:

F-E-D-C-B-A

wherein: A is an amino acid or amino acid analogue having an aliphatic side chain of form 1 to 6 carbon atoms;

B is an amino acid or analogue having a non-polar, acidic, or polar but uncharged side group;

C is an amino acid or amino acid analogue having a non-polar or acidic side chain;

D is an amino acid or amino acid analogue having a hydrophobic side group;

E together with F may be absent, but if present is an amino acid or amino acid analogue having an acidic side chain, non-polar side chain or polar, but uncharged side chain, or is a dicarboxylic acid containing up to 6 carbon atoms and lacking the amino group of acidic amino acids;

and F may be absent (either by itself, or together with E) but when present is an amino acid or analogue

having an acidic side chain or is a dicarboxylic acid containing up to 6 carbon atoms.

12. A compound according to claim 11 wherein:

A is selected from: cysteine, aminobutyric acid, di- and tri-fluoro aminobutyric acid, norvaline, allylglycine and alanine;

B is selected from: glutamic acid, aspartic acid, glycine, methyl glycine, 2-amino butyric acid, alanine, isoleucine, valine, leucine, cysteine, naphthylalanine and β-cyclohexylalanine;

C is selected from: glutamic acid, aspartic acid, glycine, methyl glycine, 2-amino butyric acid, alanine, isoleucine, valine, leucine, cysteine, naphthylalanine and β-cyclohexylalanine;

D is selected from: methionine, isoleucine, leucine, norleucine, valine, methylvaline, phenylglycine, diphenylalanine, tyrosine, thienylalanine, and chlorophenylalanine;

E is selected from: glutamic acid, aspartic acid, phenylalanine, diphenylalanine, isoleucine, valine, tyrosine, 4-nitrophenylalanine, glutaric acid and succinic acid;

and F is selected from: aspartic acid, glutamic acid, glutaric acid and succinic acid.

13. A compound, salt, or derivative, according to any one of the preceding claims for use in therapy.

14. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound, salt or derivative according to any one of the preceding claims and a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient, diluent or carrier.

15. Use of a compound, salt or derivative according to any one of the preceding claims in the manufacture of a medicament for the treatment or prevention of hepatitis C or a related condition.

16. A method of inhibiting HCV NS3 protease activity, and/or of treating or preventing hepatitis C or a related condition, comprising administering to a human or mammalian subject suffering from the condition a therapeutically or prophylactically effective amount of a composition according to claim 14, or of a compound of any one of claims 1 to 12.